

AETC News Clips



News Clips are compiled for the AETC Commander and staff by AETC/PA Copyright restrictions apply

7 SEP 01



Air Force chief hangs up stars

Ryan walked in dad's footsteps

By SIG CHRISTENSON
EXPRESS-NEWS STAFF WRITER

ANDREWS AFB, Md. — Long before he dreamed of wearing a general's stars, Michael E. Ryan flew with his father in a B-26 cockpit and watched in awe as his dad put the plane into a dive.

A pencil the boy had held in one hand only moments before hung in mid-air, briefly weightless.

"I thought that was one of the neatest things I had ever seen," Ryan remembered. "And so I was hooked at 10 years old on flying airplanes, making the pencil float."

In that moment, the seeds of an unlikely milestone — the nation's first father and son to each serve as Air Force chief of staff — were sown.

The final chapter of that story closed Thursday as the 59-year-old Ryan, a San Antonio native, marked his retirement before a crowd of 1,200 at this base outside Washington.

As Vice President Dick Che-

ney and busloads of active-duty and retired generals and admirals watched along with lawmakers and foreign dignitaries, Ryan received the Distinguished Service Medal from Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

Gen. Henry Shelton, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, also presented an award and flower bouquet to Ryan's wife, Jane.

After Ryan handed over his command to Gen. John Jumper, the Air Force's 17th chief

See RYAN/8A

Express News
PAGE 1
DATE 7 Sep 01

Ryan steps down as chief of staff

CONTINUED FROM 1A

of staff, he was given one final salute — a fly-over of four F-16 fighters, a lone F-4 Phantom, followed by a C-5 Galaxy and a B-2 bomber.

During the hourlong ceremony, he recalled a conversation with his father.

"I remember when I told him, 'Dad, I want to grow up and be a fighter pilot,' Ryan said. 'And he responded, 'Son, you can't do both.'"

Ryan and his war-hero father, the late Gen. Jack Dale Ryan, have more than a title and a Pentagon office in common, despite the different paths they took in aviation.

"I think of all the things that my dad left behind, the issue of integrity — and I have tried to live by it as best I could all my life — integrity first," Ryan said during a recent visit to Randolph AFB. "Tell it like it is, don't sugarcoat it, be straightforward, don't be somebody you're not."

Ryan unexpectedly found himself in the Air Force's top military post four years ago. He landed the job after Gen. Ronald Fogleman abruptly quit with a year left in his term.

The widely respected Fogleman walked out over Defense Secretary William Cohen's refusal to promote Brig. Gen. Terry Schwalier. The decision was made in the wake of the 1996 terrorist bombing at the Khobar Towers military dorm complex in Saudi Arabia that left 19 airmen dead.

Schwalier retired shortly after Cohen issued a statement concluding that the wing commander failed to adequately "assess the implications" of a terrorist attack on the complex.

Ryan "really kind of had to rally the troops, and it was not just because of Fogleman's resignation," said former Air Force Secretary F. Whitten Peters, who was weeks away from confirmation to the top civilian post at the time of the controversy. "Recruiting was not going terribly well, pilot shortages were a serious problem and maintenance problems just abounded."

Downsized in the wake of the Cold War, the service was spread excruciatingly thin when the Senate confirmed Ryan on Sept. 24, 1997.

The problem was one of having more work than people, and stressed-out pilots, enlistees and their families began to quit. At the same time, the booming economy that helped lure airmen out of uniform also caused fewer civilians to join.

Ryan also faced questions of how to maintain an aging fleet of planes that ranged from the venerable C-5 to the F-16. And if those problems weren't enough, he had to help the service win a war with air power alone.

But Operation Allied Force, the U.S.-led aerial assault that forced Serbia out of Kosovo in 1999 without the use of ground troops, wasn't a flash-in-the-pan event, he said.

"If you look back at Desert Storm, which was a massive use of air power, for the majority of the time air power was the engaged arm," Ryan said. "The ending in Allied Force, not having to use ground forces, I don't think is an anomaly at all. I think it's an evolution."

During Thursday's ceremony, Rumsfeld hinted at dramatic changes on the horizon as Jumper takes over Ryan's position.

Gen. Michael Edward Ryan



PHOTO

BORN: Dec. 24, 1941 in San Antonio

EDUCATION:

1965: Bachelor's degree, U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colo.

1969: Squadron Officer School, Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.

1976: Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.

1976: Master's degree in business administration, Auburn University, Auburn, Ala.

1984: National War College, Washington, D.C.

1988: National Security Program, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

CAREER:

■ Flew 100 combat missions over Vietnam

■ As Air Force commander, directed two-week-long air campaign over Bosnia in 1995 that led to Bosnia peace accords in Dayton, Ohio.

■ Oversaw the rescue of Scott F. O'Grady, the Air Force captain whose F-16 was shot down over Bosnia in 1995.

■ Promoted to general on April 4, 1996.

■ Reprimanded 16 Air Force officers, including two generals, when the military plane carrying Commerce Secretary Ron Brown crashed in Croatia in 1996.

■ Sworn in as chief of staff of the Air Force in October 1997

■ Remains only Air Force chief of staff to have followed in his father's footsteps (Gen. John D. Ryan held same position from 1969 to 1973.).

■ Holds the rank of four-star general.

MAJOR U.S. AWARDS AND DECORATIONS:

■ Distinguished Service Medal

■ Legion of Merit with two oak leaf clusters

■ Distinguished Flying Cross

■ Meritorious Service Medal with two oak leaf clusters

■ Air Force Commendation Medal with two oak leaf clusters

■ Vietnam Service Medal with three service stars

■ Air Medal with 11 oak leaf clusters

Sources: The Associated Press, the New York Times and the U.S. Air Force (www.af.mil)

ROBERT ZAVALA/STAFF

He noted that Americans are "living in a period of transition, when the threats of the Cold War have receded and the new challenges of the 21st century have not yet fully emerged."

One Pentagon plan floated recently would cut an entire Air Force wing, with about 72 aircraft.

Ryan said he wouldn't object to trimming the force "in a smart way," pointing to studies showing there are 100 more C-130s than needed. He also stressed his desire to see a new base closure round.

The Senate has received legislation from Rumsfeld calling for more base closures. While the proposal has gotten lukewarm support, Ryan said he expects it

to win congressional approval.

Pentagon observers point to Ryan's efforts in developing the Aerospace Expeditionary Force as one of his lasting legacies.

Dubbed AEF, it targets certain units for service in overseas operations and limits the length of assignments. The idea is to make deployments predictable and relatively brief so families won't be strained.

Air Force Secretary James Roche cited Ryan's role in developing the concept, as did Rumsfeld, who said, "the legacy of this smart, tough leader will be measured for decades to come in lives saved and victories won."

sigc@express-news.net